

## “...in the sight of God.”

Philippians 2:1-11

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
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### Philippians 2:1-11

*1 Therefore if [there is] any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind. 3 [Let] nothing [be done]*

*through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, [and] coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to [the point of] death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

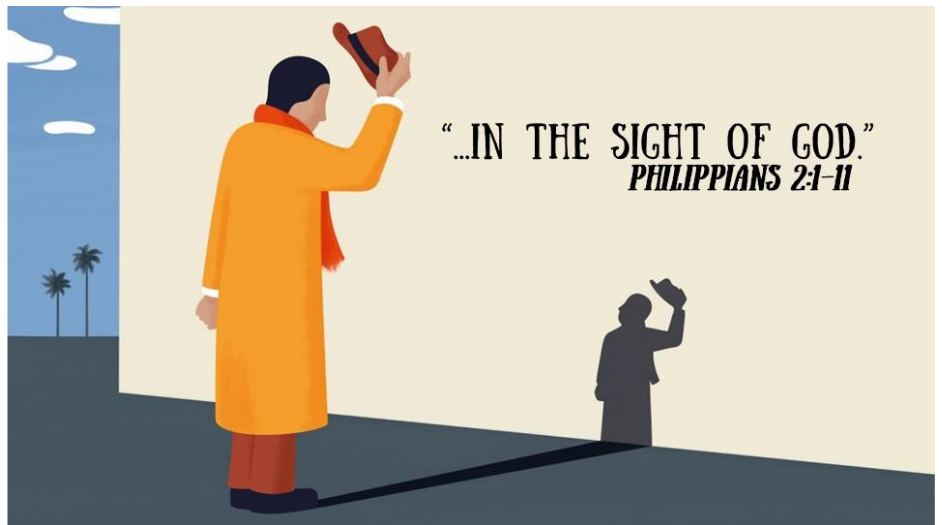
2:1-2

Paul is seeming to speak rhetorically here in this passage...*as he often did*. He is asking the believers there in Philippi whether knowing Christ was indeed providing them with a certain amount of encouragement, a ‘comfort’ from the love God gives, as well as a fellowship unity with other believers and a heart of love and mercy. I say “rhetorically” because if we belong to Christ, such a position is assured, and Paul knew that.

And with that being the case, our lives now hold an innate union with all other believers everywhere. Paul is calling us therefore to then be “like-minded” with these brothers and sisters despite any natural and worldly issues that would divide us. God quite clearly expects us to live different than the world, and one of those aspects is our living in a spirit of unity whenever it is possible.

It seems that the Philippian church was a strong and vibrant church. When a church is such, they are active and creative, aggressive and effective. Such churches are never still and never complacent, and neither are the minds or the hands of the people that make it up. However, because of this, there is always the danger of differences of opinion: differences in vision, desires, concern, emphasis, and interest. There are always different ideas as to which ministry or project should be undertaken and supported and a host of other differences. The point is this: the more strength and activity a church has, the more attention it must give to unity. Why? Because a strong church has more minds and bodies working, and where more people are working more differences are bound to arise.

Of all the things that Paul could have asked these believers for at this juncture...of all the things that could potentially “fulfill his joy” as he sat in that first century prison, it was this “unity amongst the believers” that he desired! Once again we are starkly reminded that Paul was in prison...in what was no doubt some extreme



conditions. Yet his concern was still for them, not himself. It was ultimately for the furtherance of the kingdom of God.

Now does this mean we are all to think exactly alike on all spiritual matters? Not likely. Does this mean we are to look the other way when someone is clearly “off the rails” doctrinally and yet seeks to wear the mantle of Christianity? Definitely not. We know that matters such as these are not that clearly “cut-and-dry.” Never are we to simply “check our brain at the door” and throw our hat in the ring because we all have a fish sticker on our cars.

The very nature of mankind precludes a commonality of opinions on all matters. Some things are worth fighting about and others...*many others*, are certainly not! Should there be agreement upon the major tenants of doctrine and faith according to scripture? Yes, absolutely! Paul is not telling us to have unity with the Mormon or the Jehovah Witnesses just because they claim to be Christians! Certainly we have read the accounts of Paul going at someone who was standing on false doctrine! But on the other hand, the degree of strife and infighting between churches, between denominations and even between individual believers today is shameful.

There will be differences of opinions on minor matters of interpretation, style and practice. Paul is not saying we should all be non-thinking drones, nor does he honestly expect everyone will agree on every point. But we need to understand that uniformity and unity are not the same thing. This is where we lose our way! We are being called to be at peace with each other and not bite and devour another because they go to a different church or because we maybe didn't get our way or complete satisfaction on some issue! That's what the world does, and we are supposed to be different!

If we *are* not, maybe that's because in truth we are *not*. We *aren't* different at all...no matter if we go to church and do good stuff, because we are in fact just another person from the world. To be like-minded is essentially to have the mind of Christ, to see things as He would see them, and to respond as He would respond.

We know this foundational principle is a biblical truth, and yet this call is terribly ignored and often even overtly rejected by the greater church today. This is one of the reasons many of us fail to know God's peace, and further, fail to ever know joy as Christians. Ultimately, if we fail to set down our divisive spirits and bitter hearts, we eventually are consumed from the inside out like a cancer...

2:3-4

What most often keeps us from this call to unity is simply selfishness and pride. These are two of the greatest enemies of Christian harmony and rapport, as well as the core reasons we fail to manifest the love Christ and pursue the furtherance of God's kingdom.

Paul calls upon us to deal with both ourselves as well as others through a self-spirit of humility. No one has to point out that this does not come naturally to us! Anyone who has even a cursory awareness of their own heart knows that we cannot pull this off under our own power. We *need* the Holy Spirit dwelling within us on this matter! In fact, the whole of the scripture tells us that the root problem of unregenerate man is his being totally wrapped up in himself and having no place in his life for God! So when *we* behave in the same manner once we have taken the step toward God, then we either:

- A) grieve the Spirit of God in our rebellion, or
- B) we reject the God's plan to change the inward man and therefore our outward living,
- C) or...*and this one is important*...we may very well not be saved at all, rather just embracing a religious persuasion.

For Paul, it was clear that his great love for His Father carried over to his great love for his brethren. Yet for many who claim the title of Christian, that connection is never made. They claim a love for Christ, but yet betray the critical “horizontal” relationships that scripture paints as reflective of our greater redeemed state of being. We don’t find Paul living for Himself and seeking earthly goals outside of the kingdom. Christ Himself certainly was the supreme example in all of this. He both modeled and gave a lifestyle example to us so that we might see how we are to live and what is not only possible but actually expected from one possessed by the Spirit of God.

We know that Jesus was God in flesh. And yet he “made himself of no reputation.” Note that this not only *occurred*, but moreover it means He actually *chose* to do it. He made the decision and He followed through and made this a reality. I often think we are somehow waiting for a supernatural event...a magic tidal wave, to inexplicably roll over us and make us no longer selfish creatures!

We now also...in our born again state, have the power to do this, but we still must actually choose to do it! No matter what the hyper-Calvinists will try to tell you, the scripture is overt and repetitious when it comes to the issue of free will. The Spirit will give you the “mo” to step up, but you have to choose to answer that call or not!

Jesus willingly took upon Himself the role of the servant. He “humbled Himself,” just as you and I must humble ourselves! Such is not only an act of obedience but moreover an act of love. For us, it is a clarity and understanding of the act of the cross of our salvation.

The scriptural term here is “kenosis.” It means “emptying.” It means that when Jesus came to earth, He emptied Himself of His divine abilities—which means everything Jesus did, He did as a man just like me. Before He did anything, Jesus had to be obedient to the Father, to pray, to put Himself on the line, to be empowered by the Spirit—just like you and I have to do in the situations and challenges that we face as believers. That’s why He said, “*Of my own self, I can do nothing*” (see John 5:30)—and neither can you.

When a person is serious about loving and serving God...when he or she understands the kenosis of Philippians 2, he’ll never look at life the same way again. Grasping this concept has one of the most profound affects upon an individual’s life that can be experienced on this earth. This “emptying” is crucial when considering the Holy Spirit. For in order to filled ...to be empowered with the Spirit, I must be emptied of me...

Many of us just invite the Holy Spirit into our lives to share the space with our own ongoing desires, aspirations, and self-focus. Isaiah 42:8 reminds us that God will share His glory with no man...and that means us! So how do you know if you are truly surrendered to Christ as Lord and not just Savior? How do you know if you really are a ‘bond-slave?’ You know by the way you *act* and *react* when someone treats you like one! Slaves are not noticed. Slaves are not thanked. Slaves are not invited to dinner. No one compliments them. No one applauds them. They’re expected to do their work and not be seen. And that is the mind that is to be in me.

(God in the Wasteland [Eerdmans], p. 201).(PST STEVEN COLE) “*Several studies done over the past few years show that the American public consistently defines their ultimate goals in terms of self-fulfillment. They view marriage, work, and even the church, as ways toward personal fulfillment. It’s not surprising that the general public is self-seeking. But David Wells did a survey of American seminary students that revealed that they “are oriented toward self-fulfillment, self-expression, and personal freedom to a degree that often exceeds” that of the general population. In his 1993 survey, “40.2% of the respondents affirmed that ‘realizing my full potential as a human being is just as important as putting others before myself.’” Wells goes on to observe, “Had Christ held this belief, for example, it would have ended all prospects of the incarnation.”*

The greatest enemy to being truly used by God...to finding fulfillment and joy...to being an actual faithful disciple is the almighty **“I want...”** *“I want to be this, do that, live there, and have this.”* It is the absolute antithesis to Christianity, and yet so many of us believe we can have both. You can't. True spirit filled Christianity innately fills us with the desire to live for God, kingdom, and others. Pretending that we are doing that while living a life of self is simply a lie of Satan that we have made our own. And no matter how we want to adhere to a “I believe otherwise,” spirit, it doesn't change the gospel...it doesn't change a thing except your standing with God not to mention with everyone around you.

2:5-8

Herein lies the key to the previous verses: ***“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ.”***

Jon Courson commented on this saying:

Because I didn't know this for probably twenty-plus years, when I read that Jesus walked on water, I thought, Big deal. He's Jesus; when I read that He overcame temptation, I thought, Big deal. He's Jesus; when I read that He spent the night in prayer, I thought, Big deal. He's Jesus. Thus, the miracles and stories of the Gospels were irrelevant to me as far as they related to being an example or model for me. Jesus was all God but He lived a human life...He lived as a man. Therefore we cannot wiggle out of this by claiming He had a 'special' call that we don't have or a deified heart and mind that is beyond our grasp. His mind was controlled by His love for others as well as His love for the father. We just don't find Him living for Himself and seeking earthly goals outside of the kingdom. The earthly life of Christ was lived and given to us so that we might see how we are to live and what is not only possible but expected from one possessed by the Spirit of God. Jesus was God in flesh. And yet he “made himself of no reputation.” That means He chose to do it. He made the decision and did it.

2:9-11

This is a powerful passage that reminds us of the inevitable outcome of all of this spiritual battle on earth. 1 Peter 5:6 tells us that we are to *“humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.”* If you strive to place yourself out front and center...to demand your way, you **will** be humbled...quite likely you will even be “shelved” when it comes to service and leadership. But according to scripture, if you humble yourself, you'll be exalted.

And Jesus is the Perfect example! God exalted Him because Jesus humbled Himself by becoming a slave to the point of death for all humanity. I have seen this truth play out repeatedly here in this fellowship. Those who are pastors and leaders here did not find that position by pushing themselves and their own agenda...by “working the room” as is done in the world. They did so through humble service to God, to kingdom, and to this church.

It's a hard lesson for some of us! Those who reject this path will eventually leave here in search of a position somewhere “where people will appreciate my talents and abilities!” I then watch how they go out, and ultimately do nothing once they do. There have been those here amongst us that have said openly, “I'm much more of a leader than a follower.” Well I assure you that unless you are indeed first a follower, you will never be a leader in God's kingdom, and you won't be one here in this church.

The choice we have is not **if** we will bow in humble submission, but only **when**. For those who find that humility now on this earth, they will be saved through the cross of Christ, and rewarded through the privilege of serving Him and His kingdom while here. But those who do not...even if they attend church their whole life, ...are moral, ...and do good deeds, will find themselves on their knees one day in front of the resurrected Savior of mankind. But then, it will be too late to change the judicial outcome!

Even if you are a raving atheist, an avowed pagan, a committed humanist...you **will** bow before Him. He's God and all of this is His. Our acceptance of Him...our acknowledgment of His being or our rejection of Him, does not change the reality of who and what he is. We can think that our decisions and our doctrinal or denominational beliefs actually change His nature, His status and His position in the world, but such does not. It only changes His position in *us*.

He IS the One and only Savior of men...He is the only Messiah of God...He is the Creator. And every person who ever lived will one day acknowledge that fact. Men may flaunt Christ's lordship here, but they will be compelled to acknowledge it in the hereafter. Such will not result in their salvation however. Subjugation is not reconciliation. It will however put an end to pride and rebellion.

**Luke 16:15** *And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*

**Luke 9:23** *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*